

violence. I know at the beginning of 2006, Iraq was really threatening to spiral out of control with violence. Some described it as anarchic fragmentation, which was really a very visual term for what was potentially going to happen in Iraq.

And when the President announced his surge strategy back in I think it was late December, I have to say I was very skeptical because I kept thinking, what's next? A surge is fine. We can get more troops in. The Iraq Study Group actually agrees that this could be a temporary measure to gain security. But what do we do following that to get political gains in Iraq? What can be done to help develop the economy in Iraq? These were the key issues to me.

Then it became clear, subsequently, that our State Department was working on a plan to deal with this. And it was unclear as to what exactly the steps were; but as things have unfolded, we have seen significant success over the past year.

And this was highlighted by my recent trip when I walked through the streets of Fallujah with three other Members of Congress. And I would have never thought that just even a month ago or two months ago a platoon of marines could even walk through the streets of Fallujah, much less four Members of Congress.

So as we walked through the streets, we saw shops that were open. Shop keepers were smiling, children were playing in the streets. There was a volleyball game going on on one block. Another block I saw some children playing soccer. There were families strolling through the streets and talking. And this clearly was a major change, a major departure from what we had seen just months ago in Fallujah.

And what we found out was that an Iraqi solution was being brought to bear in Fallujah, an Iraqi solution for security, which has allowed for security to grow throughout the city of Fallujah, creating an environment that's now allowing economic activity in that city.

Children are now back in school. We're seeing shops that are open, microlending programs are ongoing, and this is just tremendous success. And the hallmark of the plan that has been implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker is that you look at the circumstances in a particular local in Iraq, like Fallujah, or perhaps Ramadi or Tikrit, and work with the circumstances on the ground and make those institutions that are available work for the positive.

And what I mean by that is, what we have is a situation where, after getting security and working with the Iraqis to set up these joint security stations throughout the city of Fallujah, now we've got a provincial reconstruction team working in Fallujah. This is a team of civilians and military who are working on the political side of things, working to help build the political infrastructure from the ground up.

And now what we're seeing is tremendous success with this, with a sort of a grass roots movement. And I've said over and over, the most difficult thing is going to be to get the Iraqi central government to come to reconcile and to come to terms, because it's been a country that's been fraught with division. But it's going to be an Iraqi solution that will bring that together. And as this grass-root development happens in Fallujah, in Ramadi, in Tikrit and Mosul and other cities throughout Iraq and our communities throughout Iraq, we will see a coalescence of political activity which will put pressure on those central politicians to come forward. And that's part of the whole political process.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, the Sunni Deputy Prime Minister, his name is Salaam as Zobadaei, told us that you can look at the fruit, but the fruit will not come until you grow the tree. And that was a very, very, precise and visual way of describing what needs to happen. We need to see Iraqi institutions growing from the ground up, because then you'll have a sustainable government. To have an Iraqi Government impose from the top and to try to force it down is not sustainable. So I'm encouraged that this plan is working. We're seeing positive signs, and we need to give it further time.

These provincial reconstruction teams are doing an outstanding job. There are some 10 or 14, I believe, just in the Baghdad and Anbar area, and then one in each other province. And I think our State Department deserves tremendous credit for working under very difficult circumstances and putting these provincial reconstruction teams together to make this sort of political grass-roots movement occur.

And on the broader diplomatic front, we now know that the Saudis are looking at putting an embassy into Baghdad. Recently, the French Foreign Minister was in Baghdad and they expressed that the French want to play a bigger role. We need to have continued vigorous diplomacy to move forward to get debt relief on the Iraqi Government. And I believe if we move along on the diplomatic front, as I mentioned, on continuing to build this grass-roots political development internally in Iraq, economic development with microlending programs, all because we managed to get security, we're going to see a successful outcome in Iraq. And I think in short order we should be able to draw back down on our combat troops and offer more of a supportive role.

Mr. SHAYS. I wonder if the gentleman would yield a second.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I'd be happy to yield to my friend.

Mr. SHAYS. Just to point out to him that what you're encountering is significant. When the Iraqis say to us, be patient, give us more time, what I encountered early on was they were constantly blaming the other groups. The Shias would blame the Sunnis, the

Sunnis would blame the Kurds, and so on. But what they're starting to do is they're trying to say, we're trying to work out our differences; give us more time to work together. And that's a significant change.

I likened this to a sixth-grade dance when they first started out. They didn't know how to interact with each other. But they're starting to learn how to interact. They're starting to be defensive of Iraq and speaking more with one voice; and I think it's not an insignificant event that's taking place.

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Mr. BOUSTANY. I think the gentleman is absolutely correct. And if you look at Iraq, there were 27 ethnic groups in Iraq, hundreds of tribes, and this was all held together artificially under Saddam Hussein's reign of terror, so to speak. And now that is gone and they are trying to figure out how to reconcile all of this.

And there are signs that there is Iraqi nationalism. Look at what happened recently with their soccer team, which was a phenomenal event where everyone was celebrating in the streets. It truly showed that they have that sense of nationalism and pride in their country.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CARTER. I yield to the gentleman from Connecticut.

Mr. SHAYS. The Iraqis would say to me, How dare you say we are not a country. We are the Fertile Crescent where two great rivers have met. We have been the center of Western civilization. And for us to say they are not a real country, for them they find it very insulting.

Mr. BOUSTANY. That is absolutely true. They are a proud civilization.

And I am not at a point now where I am ready to preemptively declare defeat in this, and I do believe we need to give it time. I believe the plan is working. And for the first time since I have been in Congress, I have got a level of comfort that I believe we are on the right track. So I would urge patience in this. I do believe we will draw down some of our combat troops in the short term, and I am guardedly optimistic.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, as I was listening to everybody talk here and listening to people talk earlier today, I get struck by the history of this Chamber. And as I was sitting here, I wondered how often this debate had occurred during my lifetime or did it occur during my lifetime. I would like to think I am a student of history, but I will admit that my concentration on history from the end of the Second World War until I was in high school, there is a gap there where it is only kind of the history of me and not the history of the United States. So I don't know a lot about it, but I was thinking the Second World War in Europe ended in 1944. Germany was divided into zones, I believe, until 1952. So we actually were the government of a zone, as were Britain and